

ELIAS VARNER - INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA - 1849  
(Why signed by Allen and front says Elias?)

From Indiana State Library , Allen Varner, Indianapolis,  
Mattes Collection, See entry 663, PRAN-, original in  
Huntington Liby., National Frontier Trails Center

Typed copy of handwritten letter by Roberta Bonnewitz, May  
26, 1995:

Independence Mo. April 29th 1849, 1 O'clock PM (*Sunday*)  
Respected brother and sisters

This will inform you that I am well at present and  
entertain a sincere regard for your welfare you doubtless  
entertain some uneasiness with regard to me on account of the  
Cholera. & I think I should do your feelings more injustice  
to say nothing about it than to state facts as they are.  
The Cholera is here, but not as had been represented to us  
before we reached here.

we arrived within 6 miles of town Thursday. Friday moved to  
within 1 mile of town where we now are there is a company  
from Mississippi encamped on the opposite side of town of  
whom 2 were buried Friday. 6 more were then sick 1 of which  
was buried yesterday & another man from Chicago who had  
also come by way of St Louis. the man who had come with  
him told me yesterday that they put up at a boarding house  
here where they ate fresh Pork and that all the family were  
taken with Diarrhea his friend was taken soon after  
supper and lived till the second morning 7 O'clock & he  
thought if medical aid had been called sooner would have  
recovered slight attacks were said to be very common in  
Lexington through which we passed a few days ago. & in  
which I found Adam Rayburn & family he told me that it was  
doubtless the Cholera but in a very mild form there only  
having been 2 deaths in the place 1 a negro the other a  
boatsman it would be nothing curious if more were sick or  
dying than there are for all places of dissipation I have  
never seen the equal of Independence I saw yesterday &  
today men lying on the pavement perfectly lifeless to  
appearances, from intoxication there is at least a dozen  
bars which are all the time crowded with (topers) the keep  
up a continuous jingle of glasses you cant pass along the  
streets without

Page 2 (Has an additional message at the top of the page 2  
and page 3:

I was at Adam Rayburns he was standing in the store of  
his oldest son a very intelligent and good looking man  
a good store John was there preparing for California.  
has been in the cavalry service in (Mexico) some taller



than me but not so heavy was invited to dinner by Kemp but had not time Ann is married Mary a very pretty girl, Bill & Jo in Boonville. the old lady looks better and talks as lively as ever comfortably situated very neat house of 3 rooms well furnished Remembers her best respects to all and Mother in particular

(continuing) hearing the clank of money in the upper rooms & the wrap of knuckles on the tables. ^ in passing along the streets this morning I saw as many old cards thrown out by the side of 1 coffee house as would pave a room 10 feet square I have been informed that numbers have lost all their money and are compelled to return home but from the ridiculous to the sublime, I was at church this morning the methodist heard good music a felling prayer & good Sermon the ladies present with few exceptions seemed to be (votaries) at the shrine of fashion for taste and elegance, they are not to be surpassed if equals by any I have ever seen. the rage of the present time is changeable silk the color of a dove's neck with 2 large flounces on the skirt a white silk bonnet trimmed with Ostrich feathers or red and blue artificials hung in clusters from the (paint) ribbons are generally suspended. those who cannot afford this attire dress variously except that the posy is invariably worn by the young in the absence of a new dress, generally white the men dress more for business than appearances but you will see several dandies with their kid gloves on, while singing at the commencement of service the audience were waited on by two splendidly dressed men with gold watch chains swinging at their sides handsome withal each carrying a small black velvet sack suspended upon a plain fine stick of sufficient length to reach the most distant in the pew, but to return. The most reasonable estimate of the number that is here is 4000 including those that have already gone some to rendezvous 12 to 15 miles above on the Kans and some still further some went 15 days ago

Page 3: writing at top of page is the extension of note at the top of page 2:

on the Platte 50 miles above here they exhausted their few and had to return with their stock another company of 18 that had encamped west of St Joseph on the Indian lands contrary to orders of the agent had all their mules & horses stolen by the Indians have returned to their homes given up the gold and if it had not been for a late letter of Governor Boggs of this state who is now in the gold region near 2000 that are here would have returned he writes to his son-in-law here to come by all means but not to bring his family he says gold is plenty and easily obtained another man of Lafayette county which joins this

by the name of McClelland advises his friends to come says there are no poor men in California Both he and Boggs are men of stern integrity as I have been told by men personally acquainted with both about 1/4 that are going from here are mule teams the rest oxen about the same ratio from St Jo. the numbers that will start have been variously estimated from 20 to 50 thousand But I believe 15,000 a fair estimate from these 2 (fourty) men acquainted with the journey say that mules will beat the oxen 3 weeks so that if there is a scarcity of grass beyond the pass as we all anticipate I hope we shall be among the first a great many no doubt will return - after starting a great many would sell out now if they could mules & cattle are low now. our lame mules have got well our others have recruited on flesh. Respects to friends and best wishes to Elias & Mary, Patsy & the Boys

Allen Varney

...soon, if I have a chance, I will write to you from Kansas or Westport, don't know who will go with yet will write to some of you as soon as we find out, in a hurry



Independence Mo. April 29<sup>th</sup> 1849. 1 O'clock Pm  
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Elias Varner  
Indianapolis  
Indiana

